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Jab Swart

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The Mine Action Program for Somalia

Aiming to set up a sustainable institution for resolving Somalia's mine problem and to provide direct support for mine action activities there, the United Nations Mine Action Program for Somalia is making a difference in a country ravaged by years of conflict.

by Jab Swart, UN MA Manager Somalia

Introduction

Following years of devastation caused by civil war, clan conflict and power struggles, large areas of Somalia have regained a measure of peace and security and begun to move towards recovery. The experience of northwest and northeast Somalia in particular has shown security and restoration of law and order as essential to the creation of an enabling environment for the advance towards economic and social recovery, and in many areas, credible authorities have emerged. However, Somalia is still a divided country, and in some instances, such as Mogadishu, even single cities are ruled by up to four different authorities. The end of conflict in these areas has, however, not eliminated continued threats to security. The lack of resources to re-establish peace and security is often reflected in continuing instability, and while basic rules of law are being established by the emerging administrations, their actual capabilities remain limited. Large numbers of landmines deployed during the conflicts of the past two decades pose serious threats to people and their livestock and limit access to valuable resources.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) strategy for the Somalia program is based on an integrated and coordinated approach aimed at bridging the gap between relief and development and fostering an enabling environment for sustainable human security and development. The UNDP country program

is implemented through interventions in three broad program areas:

- Peace and security, including civil protection
- Capacity building for governance
- Economic recovery and poverty reduction

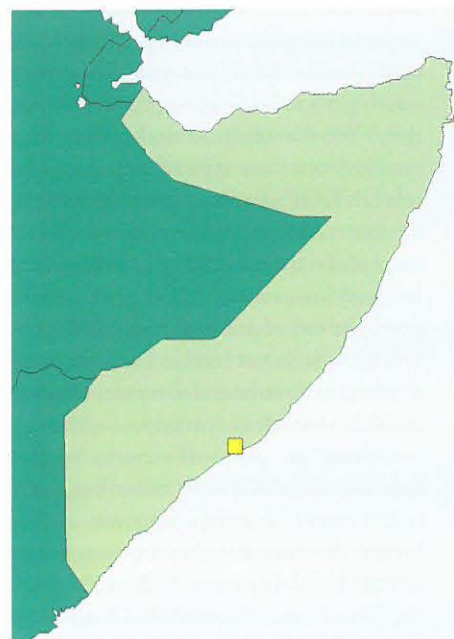
The Somali Civil Protection Program (SCPP) aims to consolidate and reinforce the still fragile peace and enhance economic and social recovery, by establishing a secure enabling environment. This will be achieved through the SCPP's program activities in five project areas:

- Social mobilization
- Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former militia
- Small arms control
- Rule of Law
- Mine Action

For the purpose of post-conflict recovery and development and in this case, Mine Action Somalia is divided into four regions, namely northwest (Somaliland), northeast (Puntland), central and south Somalia. The UNDP Mine Action Program for Somalia (UNMA) is in effect managing four separate projects, with an additional fifth sub-project in Mogadishu to provide for the opposing factions there.

The Mine/UXO Problem

Mines were first laid in significant numbers in 1966, during the conflicts with Ethiopia primarily along the border (mostly as barrier AT mine fields), and then again between 1977 and 1978. With the rise of resistance movements and civil conflicts, in the early 1980s, these mine fields were expanded further into Somali



territory to deter incursions, and the Somali Army laid additional mine fields throughout the territory in places of strategic importance. When civil war broke out in 1988, the Army heavily mined all its defensive positions and around military camps. Both the resistance movements and the government mined roads and paths used by one or the other, and mines were used randomly to terrorize the nomad and rural populations. Since 1991, some additional mines (mostly in the form of AP nuisance mine fields) have been placed in towns where localized conflicts have erupted.

In the northwest, the most heavily mined areas were around Zeyla, Berbera, Hargeisa and Burao. Now most of the mines in Hargeisa and Burao have been removed. In addition to this, most of the roads between major towns were mined, but the Hargeisa-Berbera-Burao road has now been cleared. Most of the mine fields along the Ethiopian border are still in place.

In northeast Somalia, mines are mostly concentrated along the Ethiopian border and along the inter-clan conflict line running through Galkayo. Although

some defensive mine fields were also laid along the central and south Somalia borders with Ethiopia, most of the mining took place during the counterinsurgency wars by the Siad Barre regime from 1981 to 1991 and the subsequent clan conflicts. The regions most severely affected were Galgadud, Hiran, Bay, Bakool and Lower Juba. Defensive mine fields were laid around strategically important towns and military bases (such as Belet Weyne and Huddur), while mines were used extensively for route denial between Galkayo, Belet Weyne, Baidoa and Mogadishu. The Rahanwein Resistance Army makes no secret of the fact that they are still mining the road between Baidoa and Mogadishu to discourage the perceived threat from Mogadishu. Before 1993, very little mining took place in the Mogadishu area. Since then, mines have been used extensively in ambushes against American forces, in strategic protection of areas such as the airport and seaport, as well as in defensive mine fields between warring clans. Warlords in Mogadishu are reportedly still engaging in mining in and around Mogadishu, and they supposedly have received large consignments of mines as recently as last year. In the south, mines were extensively used in inter-clan fighting. Defensive mine fields were laid around Kismayo and Bardhere, while mines were used extensively for route denial between Kismayo and Mogadishu and from Kismayo up the Juba Valley to Luuq.

Items of UXO continue to contaminate Somalia, including Soviet missiles, explosives and bunkers filled with a variety of bombs, missiles and warheads in former military bases, battle areas and most urban areas. The towns mostly affected are those where the heaviest fighting took place, namely Berbera, Hargeisa and Burao in the northwest; Bossaso and Galkayo in the northeast; Belet Weyne and Huddur in central Somalia; and Mogadishu and Kismayo in the south. In addition, stockpiles of mines remain (also in private hands), and the Somali authorities have requested assistance in addressing this situation. Because it is not a recognized state, Somalia cannot be a signatory to the Ottawa Convention, but authorities such as those in northwest Somalia, northeast Somalia and the So-

malia Transitional National Government (TNG) in Mogadishu subscribe to the requirements of the Treaty.

A major problem is that the location and extent of mined areas are largely unknown, and therefore the magnitude of the problem to be contained has not been accurately determined. A limited mine action information system currently exists (in northwest Somalia), and although some Level One and Two Surveys and Clearance have been conducted by several international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and the UNDP, the results of these actions are inadequate for use as a basis for future mine action planning. On the positive side, four credible INGOs, Danish Demining Group (DDG), The HALO Trust, Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Saint Barbara Foundation (SBF) are involved in mine action activities in northwest Somalia and, contingent on available funding, plan to expand to other regions. However, Somalia still lacks an overall coherent, coordinated mine action database and cannot yet effectively prioritize and coordinate mine action. This is the most urgent need at present, particularly as activities increase throughout the territory. Effective institutions to coordinate mine action are also needed for long-term sustainability. UNDP Somalia mine action arranged a workshop in January 2002 to formulate a strategic mine action plan for northwest Somalia and prioritize mine action activities based on existing information. In addition to this, UNDP mobilized resources for a comprehensive Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) in Somalia, during 2002. This survey will also assess and analyze the socio-economic impact of the mine/UXO contamination on a village-to-village basis. This information, in turn, will be utilized to update the mine action priorities in the region.

The significant negative socio-economic impact of landmine and UXO contamination can be seen in almost every aspect of Somali society: reduced land available for livestock and cultivation, increased transportation costs, obstacles to repatriation and re-integration of communities, poor performance of rehabilitation efforts, loss of lives, disability, psy-

chological problems and general lack of security of communities. In 2000, the reported mine victims were 107 in the northwest, 101 in the northeast, 147 in central Somalia and approximately 40 in Mogadishu, of which roughly 40 percent resulted in fatalities. These figures are by no means complete, as the reporting system is very fragmented. The presence of mines has prevented the return of approximately 200,000 refugees from Djibouti and Ethiopia. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had anticipated closing these camps by 2001 but has continually fallen short of their targets, in large part because of mine fields—real or perceived. The mine/UXO threat is a finite problem, however, and given sustained stability and funding, it can be solved within seven to 10 years.

Mine Action Activities

UN Capacity Building

The progress of project activities in northwest and northeast Somalia has taken a very important step towards sustainable Somali mine action capacities. The activities focused in the areas of strengthening local mine action management structures and institutional capacity for mine field survey, marking and database, mine clearance, mine awareness and victim assistance. Close cooperation with mine clearance organizations and improved coordination among them were successfully achieved.

The mine action component of the SCPP has been operational since 1998. Until the end of 1999, the component was directly involved in demining sub-contracts in Burao (northwest Somalia), and approximately 400,000 square meters were cleared. Since December 1999, the focus shifted to capacity building. A fully functional Somaliland Mine Action Center (SMAC) has been established in northwest Somalia, including an external quality control system and an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), with the support of an expert provided by the Swiss government. The 22 people who make up the staff of the SMAC have been fully trained to execute their responsibilities with very little supervision. The training

included formal training in demining, supervision and data management. The Mine Action Advisers also undertook on-the-job training in general, personnel, logistics and financial management. SMAC conducted external quality management and certified 35 areas cleared in northwest Somalia by international demining organizations, namely DDG, The HALO Trust, Mine-Tech and SBF. As a result, almost 30 million square meters of land were released to communities in northwest Somalia through survey and clearance. It is expected that the SMAC will be subcontracted to the northwest Somalia authorities in 2002. Elements of the Somaliland Police were equipped and are currently undergoing explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) training, which is presented by MAG.

Following consultations in northeast Somalia, the Department of Demining, Demobilization and Reintegration was identified as SCPP's mine action counterpart. A core Puntland Mine Action Center (PMAC) was established in northeast Somalia and the Somali Civil Protection Program Mine Action Program (SCPP-MA) provided the necessary technical and management training. The PMAC staff underwent training in technical demining, general management and database management.

Consultations with the authorities to extend the Mine Action program to central and south Somalia were quite successful. The TNG is currently reviewing the draft Mine Action policy provided by SCPP-MA, and UNDP Somalia gave the go-ahead to establish a Mogadishu Mine Action Office. A Mine Action Office was planned and will be established in Baidoa soon.

SCPP-MA assisted the authorities in northwest Somalia and northeast Somalia in drawing up mine action policies, which are currently being debated in the Somaliland parliament and were already ratified in Puntland. SMAC was assisted in formulating and distributing Standard Operating Procedures for Mine Action in northwest Somalia. SCPP-MA advised the authorities on the principles of the Ottawa Treaty, formulated a work plan for northwest and northeast Somalia to implement the international ban on AP landmines, and presented the plan at the

Regional Conference on Landmines in Djibouti. The northeast Somalia Administration has already ratified this plan.

Two management-level staff members of the program attended the two-month intensive mine action managers course at Cranfield University in the United Kingdom. The regional structures for mine action are now totally supported by the project. An exit policy that will shift all the capacity to local authorities is under discussion.

Mine Action is closely coordinated with other agencies and international organizations. SCPP-MA's establishment of coordination mechanisms secured donor confidence and funding of \$4.5 million (U.S.) in mine clearance activities annually in northwest Somalia. This initiative has the potential to generate more than \$10 million for Mine Action in the whole of Somalia. Mine risk education (MRE) and mine victim assistance are coordinated through the Mine Action Centers (MACs) with SCPP-MA assistance, but the focal points for execution in the United Nations are the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), respectively. Until these capabilities are fully developed within those agencies, SCPP-MA embarks on limited assistance in this regard. In this respect SCPP-MA recently completed a mine awareness program in the Somali refugee camps in Djibouti, with full co-operation of UNICEF, UNHCR, the World Food Program (WFP) and Handicap International (HI). UNICEF has now created a focal point for MRE in northwest Somalia, as a pilot project for the rest of Somalia, and established a working group for MRE. An MRE strategy was presented to the northwest Somalia authorities for approval.

Demining

DDG has been running mine clearance operations in northwest Somalia since June 1998 and currently comprises three demining teams of 24 deminers each, three mine detection dog teams, each with two dogs and one expatriate dog handler, and for Survey and EOD tasks, two quick response teams (QRTs) are deployed. DDG's area of responsibility

is the Galbeed and western Togdheer regions of northwest Somalia, especially the area defined by the Hargeisa-Berbera-Burao triangle, and south of this to the Ethiopian border. DDG finished clearing mine fields in the Adadley and Hargeisa areas and are currently working in conventional mine fields in Bali Gubadle, Dhubato and at Hargeisa Airport. They have also been heavily involved in EU-funded road rehabilitations projects, where they surveyed and cleared bridges and culverts for rehabilitation. At present, DDG is clearing the important road between Adadley and Mandhera. Northwest Somalia had a large contamination of SA-2 and SS-21 missiles at six sites in Berbera and Hargeisa, where DDG disposed of more than 60 of these missiles. Another major task has been the reduction of the danger to the population from UXO. The QRTs visited most villages in their area of responsibility several times and collected or destroyed all known threats. They have also conducted regular battle area clearance in areas heavily contaminated by UXO. These areas are normally abandoned military installations. In 2002, DDG will conduct the Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) of northwest Somalia on contract from the Survey Action Center, as Phase I of the complete Somalia survey.

SBF has been active in northwest Somalia since the autumn of 1999, but real mine action activities only commenced in 2000. These activities consist of survey, manual demining, discovery with detectors and mine detection dogs, EOD activities and MRE. The police in Burao were trained in basic EOD knowledge. In 2000, SBF cleared farmland in the Gabiley-East district by manual demining supported by mine detection dogs. The cleared area was 65,000 square meters, and a highly motivated team of 40 deminers destroyed scores of mines and UXO without any accidents. In 2001, the Foundation extended their engagement in northwest Somalia, by clearing the mine field around the Gabiley military base and all mined areas in Burao city. It was very challenging tasks, which SBF executed with distinction. Employing mine detection dogs in connection with manual demining was again very

successful. The total area cleared was 105,000 square meters, and large numbers of mines and UXO were eliminated. The number of staff deployed was 115. In 2002, SBF plans to expand its activities further into the Togdheer region, especially towards the Ethiopian border.

The HALO Trust has now been demining in Somaliland for over two years, carrying out humanitarian mine and UXO clearance. Around 250 local and two international staff are currently employed around the region, but mainly on border mine fields in the northwest and battle area clearance tasks in and around centers of population. To date a large number of AT and AP mines have been cleared, the most common types being TM 57 and P4. In addition to this, thousands of UXO have been cleared, types ranging from grenades to rockets. In addition to manual demining, HALO also operates with a mine detection dog team (for about three months a year) and an EOD/Survey Team. Collectively, all of the above have cleared almost 25 million square meters, contributing to the return and resettlement of thousands of refugees from Ethiopia. In the near future, HALO will introduce mechanical mine clearance and area reduction capabilities, with equipment currently being prepared in the United Kingdom. Another Battle Area Clearance (BAC) Team will be added and operations will move south and east, as current tasks are completed and new priorities identified. The main donors supporting HALO in northwest Somalia are the United States and the Netherlands.

Mine Action Strategy

The vision of UNDP Somalia Mine Action is to render Somalia free from the effect of mines and UXO in seven to 10 years, depending on stability in all the regions and sustained levels of funding. Its mission is to establish and maintain a sustainable National Mine Action capacity in Somalia by December 2004. In order to accomplish this goal, UNDP Somalia Mine Action is implementing a strategy comprised of the following:

- Institutional and Management Capacity

- Strengthening Management Structures and Institutional Arrangements
- Mine Field Survey, Marking and Database
- Mine Clearance
- Mine Risk Education
- Victim Assistance

Institutional and Management Capacity

The UN Mine Action Program for Somalia is executed by the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS). A Mine Action Manager (MAM) heads the Mine Action Project. An international expert, the Mine Action Operational Adviser (MAOA), is responsible for operational technical assistance and directly supports the MAM. An in-kind IMSMA Adviser, provided by the Government of Switzerland, further enhanced assistance to the capacity building of IMSMA.

Strengthening Management Structures and Institutional Arrangements

Management structures and institutional arrangements are strengthened in order to ensure that the mine action program is executed in a coordinated and efficient manner in support of the national development plan, including activities of implementing partners. This will result in national Mine Action institutions capable of planning, prioritizing, managing and coordinating the national Mine Action Program. The basis of any Mine Action activity, specifically survey and prioritization, is a sound national policy. Authorities are assisted to properly support Mine Action policy in Somalia. An interdepartmental commission for Mine Action is established and supported in every region to confirm and review Mine Action policy and priorities at least every quarter. Information, execution and Mine Action standards are coordinated from central institutions. In this case, UNDP supports the capacity building and technical assistance of regional MACs. The following specific actions are undertaken:

- Assisting authorities in the four major regions of Somalia in formulating and promulgating mine action policies.

- Assisting in the establishment of interdepartmental commissions responsible for making and reviewing mine action policy and priorities for mine action activities.

- Providing advocacy for the adherence to international mine ban treaties.
- Providing basic office equipment to national Mine Action authorities and further assistance for electricity, office and operating expenses.

- Assisting in the establishment and maintenance of MACs in the four regions, consisting of information, operations, standards and training and administrative cells and responsible for the coordination of all mine action activities, including advocacy of mine ban treaties, survey, clearance, quality management (QM), mine awareness and victim assistance.

- Establishing Regional Mines Offices in areas of high mine/UXO threat.
- Providing technical assistance, equipping, training and operational support for the above.

Mine Field Survey, Marking and Database

The use of surveys, marking and databases is necessary to determine the extent of the problem, plan and conduct clearance according to priority areas, support development and humanitarian tasks and to determine exact locations of contaminated areas and mark them. Cleared areas are certified, and maps/databases updated. Local authorities and inhabitants are notified of cleared areas and those that still pose a threat. No coherent Mine Action program can be executed if it is not based on the processed data of a comprehensive National Landmine Impact Survey (NIS), which will assist the authorities to formulate meaningful priorities for Mine Action. Mine Action data, if not related to socio-economic data, is of little use in determining Mine Action priorities. In this respect, the following objectives are pursued:

- Recruitment and training of IMSMA personnel in the MACs.
- Establishment of an IMSMA database in the MACs.
- Execution of a comprehensive NIS. This process is planned and coordinated by the Survey Action Center (SAC).

National Mine Action Programs

has already conducted an advance assessment mission for a countrywide NIS of Somalia and the first phase, the survey of northwest Somalia, has been funded and will commence in April 2002, conducted by DDG.

- Collection and collation of data.
- Compilation and distribution of data to all clients, including other departments and humanitarian organizations.

Mine Clearance

The physical detection and destruction of mines and UXO are carried out in accordance with national priorities and the International Standards on Humanitarian Mine Clearance Operations. The UN MA program includes ensuring that deminers are provided the necessary training and equipment to conduct clearance operations in an efficient and safe manner. UNDP does not conduct clearance operations itself, but assists in the capacity building of national mechanisms to coordinate all Mine Action activities, including survey and clearance by its international partners. Furthermore, the UNDP ensures that the national authorities develop capacities to deal with UXO and the residual mine/UXO threat after the conclusion of the international Mine Action program. UNDP Somalia MA executes the following additional activities:

- Assisting in the establishment of sustainable EOD capabilities in the four regions, to deal with UXO and the residual mine threat after the international demining programs are concluded.
- Encouraging survey and clearance in areas where mining has come to an end and coordinating mechanisms have been established.
- Mobilizing resources for mine action activities in cooperation with UNDP Somalia.

Mine Risk Education

The scope, target groups and coverage of MRE in Somalia will be expanded to cover all the mine-affected areas and populations. In particular, mine awareness policies are established, and plans are formulated and implemented in cooperation with UNICEF, NGOs and authorities.

Victim Assistance

Training local professionals, coordinating existing resources and acquiring additional resources are required. In particular, victim assistance policies are established and plans formulated and implemented in cooperation with WHO, NGOs and authorities.

Conclusion

At the end of the project, it is expected that an appropriate mine action strategy and policy based on thorough consultation will be in place and the following will have been achieved:

- Strengthening appropriate institutional management, financial and administrative mechanisms, which will allow Somalis to effectively manage, coordinate, oversee and support all components of the mine action program in a transparent and responsive manner.
- Strengthening the process for elaborating National Mine Action Plans, including setting priorities.
- Improving a sustainable mine clearance indigenous national capacity that is competent in technical, administrative and policy matters and that will require reduced external technical assistance in the future.
- Developing mine awareness policy and expanding MRE activities to additional populations.
- Developing victim assistance policy

and strengthening mine victim treatment centers.

- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall mine action program within the country.
- Increasing the level of donor confidence.

These measures will in turn result in:

- Quicker clearance of contaminated areas resulting in reduced deaths and injuries and appropriate medical care for mine victims.

- Released land for resettlement of displaced persons and returning refugees and for agricultural development. Reconstruction and rehabilitation of public infrastructure including schools, roads, bridges and commercial and industrial enterprises will also be accelerated.

While it is not expected that Somalia will be totally free of mines within the duration of the project, the objective is to set a sustainable institution for resolving the mine problem in place and to provide direct support for mine action activities. Regional administrations have already taken important steps toward that end, and this project will result in considerable further advances. Nonetheless, based on discussions with administrations and experience with mine action programs in other countries, it is expected that the local institutions involved will require further assistance for several years beyond the end of this project, including both technical assistance and resources for mine action operations. ■

Contact Information

Jab Swart, Manager
UN MA Somalia
Tel: +2528220069
E-mail: scpp@online.no